

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 26, 2021
9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Roger Holland, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Tom Begich via teleconference

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair via teleconference
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair via teleconference
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky via teleconference
Representative Grier Hopkins via teleconference
Representative Mike Prax via teleconference
Representative Mike Cronk via teleconference
Representative Ronald Gillham

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: STATUS UPDATE FROM DISTRICT AND K-12 BUILDING
LEADERS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director

Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced the presentation by members of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

KERRY BOYD, President
Alaska Superintendents Association;
Superintendent
Yukon-Koyukuk School District
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a status update as part of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

ROBIN JONES, President
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals;
Principal
Chief Ivan Blunka School
New Stuyahok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a status update as part of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

JENNIFER RINALDI, President
Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals;
Principal
Willow Elementary School and Bryozova K-12
Willow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a status update as part of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

ANDY RATLIFF, President-Elect
Alaska Association of School Business Officials;
Senior Director
Office of Management and Budget
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a status update as part of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

SAM JORDAN, Grants Administrator and Outreach
Alaska Staff Development Network
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Mat-Su, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a status update as part of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:02:29 AM](#)

CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND called the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees to order at 9:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Hughes, and Chair Holland. Senator Micciche joined shortly thereafter, and Senator Begich joined via teleconference during the course of the meeting. House members present were Representatives Gillham and via teleconference Hopkins, Cronk, and Co-Chairs Drummond and Story. Representatives Zulkosky and Prax joined via teleconference during the course of the meeting.

PRESENTATION: STATUS UPDATE FROM DISTRICT AND K-12 BUILDING

[9:06:22 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the presentation Status Update from District and K-12 Building Leaders by Dr. Lisa Parady, Executive Director of Alaska Council of School Administrators.

[9:06:33 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Juneau, Alaska, said the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) is a private, nonprofit organization that represents the Alaska Superintendents Association, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Alaska Association of School Business Officials and the host of school administrators serving Alaska students every day. ACSA is also the parent organization of the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN). Each person today will describe their respective organization.

DR. PARADY said that educators immediately came together to collaborate on how to respond to the needs of students and communities during the pandemic. ACSA has hosted weekly meetings of superintendents, principals, school business officials, and education leaders from across the state. She thanked Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink and Dr. Olsen from the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) for providing updates and Department of Education Commissioner Johnson for his stalwart and ongoing support to ACSA and all its members.

DR. PARADY presented slide 5 and called attention to the ACSA joint position statements. Members during the presentation will refer to different sections of the statements. ACSA is a collective voice and arrived at these priorities after months of work to find consensus about what is most important to education in Alaska each year.

[9:11:53 AM](#)

KERRY BOYD, President, Alaska Superintendents Association; Superintendent, Yukon-Koyukuk School District, Fairbanks, Alaska, said it has been a challenging year. As Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA) president, she picked out the vision statement, "Leading together for Alaska's students." Alaska is one large state and while it is tight knit, it is 54 school districts stretched out over vast and diverse regions with diverse needs. Nineteen are Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAAs). With all their differences, ASA still comes together weekly or every other week to discuss how to best serve students in Alaska

MS. BOYD presented slide 8, Alaska schools by the numbers. The school districts are often the largest employers in these communities. Alaska has over 132,000 students over 20 percent of whom are enrolled in correspondence. There are 455 school facilities and nearly half are more than 40 years old with a backlog of maintenance needs. There are over 7,500 teachers with chronic turnover. In the last month she has lost four teachers. That is a lot when schools have two or three teachers.

[9:15:17 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said he is less focused on the number of school districts than whether the districts are logically and effectively organized. He asked her perspective of the organization of the districts compared to other states

MS. BOYD replied that she will follow up with a response. She related that she has been working with the state to organize Rampart School from Yukon Flats into her district because students have the same cultural beliefs and background. She opined that that is something to look at.

[9:17:17 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked for the number of administrators among all the school districts who have no classroom instruction duty.

MS. BOYD replied that she would follow up with the information.

CHAIR HOLLAND recognized that Representative Zulkosky joined the meeting virtually.

MS. BOYD presented a list on slide 9 to illustrate the volume of work that has gone on behind the scenes during the pandemic. This has been her most challenging year as superintendent. It

has actually been more difficult with schools closed. The work doubled. She doesn't know how the recent closure in the Capitol has affected legislative work in terms of virtual meetings, but teachers have had to do this since March. It has been very disruptive but things are looking brighter with vaccinations.

MS. BOYD displayed on slide 10 the results of a recent superintendent survey on priorities and barriers for student achievement. The largest priorities are teacher retention and literacy and the greatest barriers are teacher retention, support for teachers, limited bandwidth, and early learning gaps. Remote learning is noted as a hindrance to student achievement. All are anticipating that addressing the consequences of the pandemic will be long term. On the bright side, districts are planning on using what they learned. She has heard from colleagues that many students are excelling in the virtual environment.

[9:20:38 AM](#)

MS. BOYD presented slide 11 showing the COVID-19 Hold Harmless Funding for FY21 joint position statement. Early in the pandemic ACSA anticipated an impact on enrollment as families struggled to work from home and home school their children. The slide read as follows:

October student enrollment numbers are the biggest determinant of state revenue for districts in Alaska. COVID-19 has caused major enrollment disruptions. Current Hold Harmless statutes provide some relief to districts for enrollment losses in neighborhood brick and mortar schools, but Hold Harmless does not provide protection for migration to homeschool or loss of intensive needs students. ACSA supports legislative action that would provide FY21 Hold Harmless funding at 100% for the entire Foundation Formula based on FY20 OASIS enrollment counts for districts with decreased brick and mortar enrollment. This will allow districts to honor employment contracts and commitments made for FY21.

MS. BOYD displayed an ACSA letter to the commissioner on slide 12. She said he has been responsive to the letter and expressed strong support for using the November 2019 estimated student count data to determine the amount of student aid for FY2021. MS. BOYD noted that seven districts might be in a critical position due to funding.

[9:22:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY recognized that Representative Prax had joined the meeting remotely and Chair Holland recognized that Senator Begich had joined remotely as well.

MS. BOYD displayed shifting enrollment numbers on slide 13. Typically as a superintendent she projects student enrollment fairly closely. That is not the case this year for most districts. Some districts were worried about lost enrollment while other districts with correspondence programs struggled to find the staff and resources to keep up with the surge in enrollment. On average, districts have seen a decrease of 9.41 in Average Daily Membership. The challenge is anticipating what families will choose to do in the fall. Superintendents are collaborating about making enrollment projections but they won't know until fall. Shifting enrollment is another variable. Districts expect most students to return to brick-and-mortar schools with a slight decrease but no cost savings.

MS. BOYD spoke to the importance of stabilizing school districts on slide 14. The pandemic is temporary but the impact is lasting. Future funding must consider the cost of recovery. The current statute is not sufficient to cover losses that many districts face. The cost of turnover alone is great. Using the November 2019 estimated student count data will still not meet all of the increased costs to stabilize budgets. It is not just about funding. It is about students and what districts need to provide for them, such as summer school, extended learning opportunities, and academies.

MS. BOYD showed a composite of superintendents from 2009/2010 on slide 15. She is the only one remaining. The state is losing superintendents at a fast rate. She could tell the committee why the state is losing them, but she would rather talk about solutions.

9:26:30 AM

MS. BOYD said that when she first became a superintendent, the state paid for a mentor for one year, which was wonderful. That funding stopped and ACSA has taken over providing mentors for the last five years. The statistics show that educators from outside the state do not stay long. ACSA has been offering programs to mentor Alaskan educators.

MS. BOYD said stable, predictable funding is important. It improves efficiency, keeps the focus on student achievement, and districts know what they are working with. She doesn't have to

have three to five plans. When she knows her budget, she can sign contracts, not pink slips.

MS. BOYD said that ACS has been creating a pipeline to address some of the chronic turnover. It is a crisis across the nation, but is more prevalent in Alaska. ACSA has a variety of programs to help superintendents. So far this year, thirteen superintendents are leaving, but with the pipeline there will be new superintendents and principals.

9:29:07 AM

MS. BOYD presented the joint position statement on school safety:

ACSA advocates for safe and secure schools as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. ACSA supports improving the safety and well-being of our students knowing this is critical to increasing student achievement. ACSA supports providing school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. School safety is developed through maintaining effective, positive relationships among students, staff, communities, and tribes responding to local needs.

ACSA supports full funding for law enforcement, Village Public Safety Officers, and state troopers. School districts should have access to these public safety supports.

ACSA supports funding through the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) school construction process for construction and modifications to existing school district facilities in order to provide students a safe and healthy learning environment. ACSA urges that all safety improvements should be made a priority.

MS. BOYD reported that school construction and major maintenance is \$2.3 billion. The average building is 39 years old, and 59 buildings are over 60 years old.

MS. BOYD displayed a table on slide 21 from the Alaska Municipal League showing that the state has funded 8.6 percent of requested projects, 118 of 1,366. This the only list that REAAs can use; it is the only funding source. Every two years districts are required to resubmit an application. It can cost \$20-\$30,000 or more to update applications. The backlog of

maintenance is a whole state problem. This needs to be looked at for the safety of students.

9:31:20 AM

MS. BOYD shared the joint statement on career and technical education. Some districts are doing well with career and technical education; others need more help. There have been different funding sources over the years. Her members agree with career and technical education as one of the priorities of the Alaska Education Challenge.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional learning with DEED, the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, and the University of Alaska with educators and industry-based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. ACSA fully supports voluntary internships that prepare students for high-earning, high-demand jobs, as well as dual credit offerings that provide opportunities to obtain an occupational certification or credential. These programs give students the opportunity to build future-ready skills. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, tribal, regional, and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving on-time graduation rates, higher career earnings, and decreasing dropout percentages.

9:33:54 AM

ROBIN JONES, President, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals; Principal, Chief Ivan Blunka School, New Stuyahok, Alaska, said the theme of her presidency of the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals has been "creating meaningful connections through unity in leadership." She will describe the work she has done in her school district to illustrate that.

MS. JONES said she has served in the same district for 12 years. Early on she realized she had to immerse herself in community before she could make a difference in the lives of her students, and she helps her staff connect in the same way.

MS. JONES said a Pew Research study shows that principals are the most trusted leaders in the country's most prominent institutions. Public trust is an asset and provides principals a

platform of credibility. That trust puts principals in a better position to advocate for all students.

MS. JONES said that with a 38 percent turnover rate for principals and 36 percent for teachers in rural-remote Alaska, communities have developed a deep distrust of schools, principals, and teachers. This makes teacher retention efforts more important than ever.

MS. JONES said that principals affect student learning through their influence over schools, support of staff, and work to maintain a positive culture and climate. The principal's ability to create positive work conditions and collaborative learning environments play a critical role in attracting and retaining teachers. Teachers cite principal support as one of the most important factors in their decisions to stay in a school or their professions. When principals leave, the instability creates a loss of shared purpose and trust. A change in leadership can derail school improvement initiatives, make it difficult to build school capacity, and lower student achievement. When many schools in the nation are struggling to recruit and keep teachers, the leadership of a strong principal takes on added importance for student success.

9:38:00 AM

MS. JONES said that is important to understand equity issues that affect turnover and student achievement. Despite the incredible support of legislators in the past to increase bandwidth in underserved areas, Alaska still has communities that do not have infrastructure to support the 25 mbps of download provided by the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) and do not have access to home internet services. The sudden shift to virtual learning has highlighted the need for equitable access to the digital world both inside and outside the school environment. In Southwest Region School District, despite extraordinary effort to set up an intranet system, it still does not have the infrastructure for online learning. Also, there is no such thing as unlimited internet in rural Alaska. The data caps make online learning virtually impossible. The average cost of a 60 gigabytes home plan is \$199.99 per month. Even when free in-home internet was provided in the spring, the sudden increase in use created a slower connection for everyone. Southwest Region often has unreliable cell phone coverage, so the district cannot even rely on cellular service to connect to students and parents. The Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals and affiliate associations have been joining forces to improve

retention and close the opportunity gap for students across Alaska.

[9:39:57 AM](#)

MS. JONES presented the following joint position statements:

Preparing, Attracting, and Retaining Qualified Educators

Retaining effective educators and leaders is essential to increasing student achievement and eliminating academic disparity for all of Alaska's students. ACSA strongly encourages the development of comprehensive statewide programs to prepare, attract, and retain high quality, diverse educators and professionals. ACSA further recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts along with a renewed commitment to growing our own educators, teachers, principals, and superintendents.

The national teacher shortage compounds our need to fund a robust educator pipeline with the University of Alaska. ACSA strongly supports one unified and aligned University of Alaska College of Education. Exploring innovative alternative pathways is paramount to attracting high quality educators to the state and the education profession to address Alaska's unique circumstances. A nationally competitive state retirement system is imperative for attracting and retaining effective educators and leaders.

Increasing Bandwidth in Under-Served Areas

It is critical that we recognize the ongoing and increasing need for Alaska's students, educators, and leaders to have equitable access to the digital world both inside and outside of the school environment. Access to modern technology in order to transform learning, create efficiencies, provide online health services, and keep pace with peers globally is especially essential in rural and under-served communities where infrastructure is extremely limited or non-existent.

ACSA supports continuing the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) in order to ensure all schools are able to access a minimum of 25 megabits of download per second as this leverages federal E-Rate funds up to a 9:1 match. ACSA also supports efforts by the legislature to increase innovative infrastructure capacity through public/private partnerships and statewide consortiums in an effort to provide all communities with equitable access to affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet.

9:40:38 AM

MS. JONES reported that almost 60,000 students lack bandwidth for digital learning.

MS. JONES said statewide leadership development programs were cut because of funding, but with partnerships of many Alaska organizations, the Alaska School Leadership Academy provides early career principals with a mentor and collegial cohort. Over three years, the academy has supported principals from 64 schools. She has served as a mentor coach to eight new principals.

9:43:18 AM

MS. JONES said that instead of becoming a turnover statistic, she made an ongoing commitment to serve as an educator and leader in rural Alaska for almost 13 years. At the school level, principals are the second most important factor associated with student achievement, right after teachers. Principal turnover can result in a decrease in student achievement. The average cost of teacher turnover is \$20,000 and an astonishing \$75,000 for each principal turnover. Her site has had many years of almost 100 percent retention of a team with many leadership and educator awards, but instead of investing in these exceptional educators, public education funds continually are on the chopping block and educators are being asked to do more and more with less and less.

MS. JONES said that each staff member wears so many hats. They are counselors, nurses, social workers, law enforcement agents, and mental health providers to students who come to them broken with some of the highest rates of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in places lacking adequate public safety supports and health services. Each of her teachers goes above and beyond every day with extremely limited resources and training to be everything for these children and meet their unique needs while making them feel safe and helping them heal. Her team is stronger because of collegiality, relational trust and institutional knowledge established by these dedicated educators who are devoted to increasing student achievement, preserving culture, closing gaps, and providing students every opportunity to be successful. Sadly, this story is the exception, not the rule. One hundred percent of certified staff, including her, fall into the Tier III, defined contribution retirement system, with no access to social security and no safety in their future. Many are trying to model what has been accomplished in New Stuyahok, but until education funding is

prioritized, until a more competitive retirement system is made available, until school safety measures along with social, emotional, mental health supports are in place, until students have access to equitable opportunities regardless of where they live, while she will just stand to lose exceptional educators from her team every year, it is the students and communities who thrive and rely on this consistency who will suffer the most. She asked legislators to support any legislation that helps create these meaningful connections through unity in leadership.

9:47:00 AM

JENNIFER RINALDI, President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals; Principal, Willow Elementary School and Bryozova K-12 Willow, Alaska, described the structure and mission of the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, which has increased membership this year. Before talking about two important education issues, she wants to share two beliefs that have helped guide her when challenges arise as an administrator. The first is that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. By approaching issues from a proactive perspective, an incredible latitude is gained when it is necessary to course correct. This is preferable to operating in a reactive mode where in education, the effects can last for generations. The second is that when problems occur, it is important to be solution driven. Her goal today is to share challenges and also solutions.

9:50:18 AM

MS. RINALDI said the information on slide 44 presents a troubling picture of the social, emotional, and mental health of youth. The rate of child maltreatment and suicide is quite high. Educators are gaining a deeper understanding of ACEs and its long-term effects. When she began her career in education almost 20 years ago, the term ACEs was not widely known. Now she frequently conducts staff trainings on ACEs. The good news is that people with high ACEs numbers can recover and preventing ACEs and building resilience in Alaskans who have experienced them has the potential to pay enormous dividends.

9:50:54 AM

MS. RINALDI presented a graph on slide 46 showing more than half of young Alaskans have experienced one or more ACEs prior to the age of 12. This data is more than 10 years old. It would be surprising if these numbers have decreased. A study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated the average childhood cost of nonfatal child maltreatment to be \$48,375 per victim. This has an impact on classrooms and teachers who

struggle with limited resources, training, and time to provide individualized assistance to students. Buildings are grossly understaffed for mental health supports. Many do not have adequate counseling staff. The state must realize children are facing crises at critical levels, and teachers are overwhelmed and frustrated with the expectation that they provide services that they don't have the expertise or adequate time for.

MS. RINALDI presented ACSA solutions on slide 47 for challenges students face from ACEs. She shared a story about the efforts of a social worker to help a student dealing with suicide ideation. With ongoing behavioral health services, the student was able to continue attending school. Teachers don't have time for this type of case management, nor is it their role. By allocating funding to support students when they are first experiencing challenges, the state is ultimately saving money and lives.

9:56:05 AM

MS. RINALDI presented the joint position statement on social, emotional, and mental health on slide 48:

Alaska's students endure extremely high rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), reflected in Alaska having the highest rate of teen suicide attempts in the nation.

ACSA urges the state to provide funding and resources so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally responsive, school-based mental health programs to foster the health and development of students.

ACSA supports targeted funding to enable schools to recruit, retain, and increase students' access to school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists and to provide additional professional development for all staff to meet the increasing and diverse needs of all students.

MS. RINALDI said that when the youngest Alaskans have access to quality pre-K programs, there are many numerous returns. Early intervention in instruction is one of best predictors of student achievement:

MS. RINALDI displayed a graph on slide 50 showing how early childhood programs pay dividends for years. She presented on

slide 51 the joint position statement on early childhood education:

According to the 2019 Alaska Developmental Profile, nearly 70% of Alaska's students enter kindergarten lacking foundational preparation for learning. ACSA supports the definition of elementary education to include Pre-K, thus ensuring equitable access to fully funded, sustainable, birth to age five learning programs. This provides a foundation of critical social, emotional, and cognitive instruction to students. Research clearly demonstrates early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to decrease opportunity gaps across all demographics and create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by third grade and minimize the dropout rate. ACSA supports adequate early childhood education and Pre-K funding as part of the base student allocation.

MS. RINALDI said that early childhood education and social, emotional, and mental health supports are closely intertwined and both critical components for student success. Students are facing more challenges, and education and education funding cannot remain the same. There is so much to be proud of in the state. Many are working tirelessly for the success of the youngest Alaskans, but the state has work to do to. Goals will not be met by assigning blame to one stakeholder group, but by proactively working together to address the state's challenges by identifying resources and providing the supports so greatly needed in schools today.

[9:59:14 AM](#)

ANDY RATLIFF, President-Elect, Alaska Association of School Business Officials, Senior Director, Office of Management and Budget, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, said that because it is hard to find governmental accountants, the Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO) has taken a grow-your-own approach to fill these positions. ALASBO has an institute and mentoring program to train people. This includes jobs in finance, payroll, budgeting, transportation, and facilities. The finance section of the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has been a great asset.

MR. RATLIFF on slide 56 presented the joint position statement on priority funding for education.

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of

education in all districts and providing full and equitable funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional resources. Early notification of funding and forward funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

MR. RATLIFF said that in Anchorage the budget is prepared and passed by the school board prior to March 1 in accordance with the municipal charter. These budgets are usually prepared prior to the legislature taking up a budget bill. Generally these budgets have reductions because of inflationary pressures. If any funding changes are made during the session, the district will rework its budget. Even if the district receives additional funding and can add back what was originally cut to balance the budget, it is demoralizing for the affected staff and fosters distrust among staff and community. Eliminating positions and adding them back creates a crying wolf effect. Forward funding would allow stability for staff and help districts recruit and retain qualified educators.

MR. RATLIFF presented the revenue-enhanced fiscal plan imperative joint position on slide 57. This is not to just benefit education. It would benefit state departments and communities that depend on state funding.

Alaska has made progress by cutting the budget and restructuring the use of Permanent Fund earnings for sustainable funding of both the Permanent Fund Dividend and a portion of government services. State expenditures have been cut by approximately 43% (\$3.45 billion) excluding dividends since FY13 when the current run of deficit spending began.

Implementation of a long-term, multi-revenue fiscal plan remains imperative to maximize the ability of districts to meet student needs. Diversified revenue streams are critical in the current fiscal climate to address the remaining deficit and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, and deferred maintenance capital requirements, while maintaining the existing minimal reserves in the Constitutional Budget Reserve. For the coming fiscal years, the state legislature must consider options for new revenue, such as new taxation (income, sales, education head tax, etc.), changes in oil taxes, and further restructuring of the Permanent Fund Dividend income stream.

ACSA opposes cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments.

MR. RATLIFF reviewed how enrollment becomes the adjusted Average Daily Membership turns into funding on slide 58.

MR. RATLIFF presented a graph on slide 59 showing how the state spends education money. Seventy-five percent of funding goes to instructional functions; 25 percent goes to total support functions. This includes district administration and support, school boards, business and HR functions, etc., the functions that are outside of classrooms.

MR. RATLIFF presented a graph on slide 60 showing what is included in the 75 percent of funding that goes to instructional functions.

[10:08:23 AM](#)

MR. RATLIFF presented the joint position statement on healthcare costs on slide 61:

Providing health insurance to our employees is essential for retaining and recruiting high-quality staff who can maximize student achievement. Controlling the cost of health care for our essential workers is critical. We encourage solutions to the long-term escalating costs of health insurance in the state. We support exploration of various mechanisms to decrease health care costs, including such measures as: allowing employers to purchase health insurance policies across state lines, controlling the cost of medivacs, and promoting personal wellness and proactive health care options.

MR. RATLIFF showed reasons why costs in Alaska are high on slide 62. They are among the most expensive in the nation, which is a direct correlation between worker's compensation and healthcare costs. The cost of liability insurance has risen. That is a nationwide trend. It is very expensive and must be addressed. Rural areas have high energy costs. Rural areas provide teacher housing, and shipping and transportation are high. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 15 percent from 2011 to 2020. He displayed a map showing the cost differentials between Alaska and the nation on slide 63.

[10:11:40 AM](#)

MR. RATLIFF displayed information from the Alaska Municipal League on slide 64 showing state and local spending on education adjusted for inflation since 2009.

MR. RATLIFF displayed the pencil chart from DEED on slide 65. The chart shows the Base Student Allocation (BSA) since 2011; there has been a 4.4 percent increase from 2011 to 2021. There were years of funding provided outside of the BSA. The chart on slide 66 shows the BSA adjusted for inflation from FY 11 to FY21. The trend is downward. There has been a 12 percent decline in purchasing power. The Anchorage School District staffing over the same time period was reduced by 10 percent FTE (full-time equivalent). It would have been more but the district used its fund balance to keep it being a 12 percent decrease. The district has found efficiencies in some areas, but nearly 90 percent of the budget goes to personnel.

MR. RATLIFF showed on slide 67 other funding issues are transportation, which has not been adjusted since 2015, and bond debt reimbursement, which is only for bonds passed prior to 2015, has shifted responsibilities to municipalities.

MR. RATLIFF concluded his portion of the presentation by showing additional resources on slide 68 that may help legislators make tough decisions.

10:16:24 AM

SAM JORDAN, Grants Administrator and Outreach, Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), Alaska Council of School Administrators, Mat-Su, Alaska, stated that outside of school districts, ASDN is the largest provider of professional development in Alaska. It is a statewide resource for K-12 professional development. ASDN provides educators multiple pathways to refine and improve their instructional practice. ASDN gives all educators opportunities to learn cutting edge, innovative practices. He provided pertinent numbers about ASDN on slide 71.

MR. JORDAN stated that ASDN has leveraged the power of technology to reach and support educators for years, but in March had to pivot to support educators as they moved into remote teaching. ASDN offered 56 online workshops on new practices and strategies. Everything was offered at no cost. ASDN saw the creation of a supportive community of educators focused on the demands of teaching during a pandemic. ASDN repeated the model in the fall. It was one of the most gratifying moments for ASDN as an organization.

10:20:07 AM

MR. JORDAN stated that ASDN hosts the Annual Effective Instruction Conference each year; it brings the most important voices in K-12 education to Alaska for the conference. The 2021 conference was virtual for the first time. It allowed educators from some of the most remote schools to participate. With over 1,200 participants, it was the largest conference ever.

MR. JORDAN related that ASDN hosts the Alaska School Leadership Institute at the end of each year. It targets supporting leaders for small and rural schools. The institute this year will be virtual and focus on rebounding from the pandemic.

MR. JORDAN identified ASDN as the lead professional learning partner with multiple school districts. ASDN is the partner for GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant. ASDN is in the third year of a partnership to teach educators coding through code.org. Computer science jobs in Alaska going to Alaskans starts with computer science education in schools.

10:25:53 AM

MR. JORDAN stated that ASDN runs AkPLN, the Alaska Professional Learning Network. More than 2,500 Alaskan educators have joined the online platform. It allows people to connect around curriculum and instruction and learn from each other

MR. JORDAN concluded his comments saying his second passion project is ouralaskanschools.edublogs.org. It highlights amazing things that have happened in education over the past two years.

10:26:40 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND thanked the presenters and advised that the committee would submit questions and he would submit them to Dr. Parady.

SENATOR MICCICHE expressed his hope to have a follow up during which the presenters would respond to the questions the members submit. He shared that he had at least nine questions.

10:27:33 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 10:27 a.m.